

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA



Oct/Nov/Dec 1997

Dave Hughes on Road to Recovery.

Gerbig has Big Article in '73'.

If you'll look on page 30 of the August '97 issue of 73 magazine, you'll see an important article by our Dave Gerbig, WB9MZL, titled "Emergency Communications". Dave notes that large corporations are bidding to buy up the radio bands and that these buy-ups could cause us to lose some of our ham bands. He suggests that "amateur radio's participation in emergency communications may be the only salvation in our struggle to keep our ham bands intact and healthy." He says that we must use every chance we get to practice emergency communications for events such as parades, long-distance running races, bicycling events, etc. It's a must read for all of us who consider hamming a serious and important contribution to the health and welfare of humankind.

Radio Operator's Guidebooks Selling Briskly.

Barbara Anderson, N9XSS, director of Indiana's Hilly Hundred Weekend E-mails: "I will be holding my Hilly Hundred Radio Operators' training session on October 3rd, and I would like to have 25 copies of Dave Gerbig's Radio Operator's Guidebook on hand for that. I know I won't use them all at the session, but when more hams show up on the Hilly Hundred, I'd like some books to give to them. I'd also like 5 copies of the Tour Leader's Guide. I've sent a check for \$60. Please get it in the mail today. Sorry to rush you—I seem to live life on the run, and I've never yet won any marathon contests." (The guidebooks were sent out same day, by Priority Mail. —ed.)

BMHA Needs Your Help!

For the first time since its beginning in 1989, BMHA's membership has stopped growing. Our ads in cycling magazines have stopped pulling in prospects. I would welcome any suggestions or comments on how we could get off this plateau. Send them to hartleya@aol.com or POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306. Members, please give some thought to this!

Here's a member who makes a difference: Scott Farrell, KE4WMF, writes: "I ride with several bikies who are not members of BMHA. I'd like material to give them to perhaps persuade them to become members.:" In cases like this we send a package of 5 sample newsletters along with info about BMHA and its members, and about how to become a ham. Contact us and we'll send you a similar package. If you have a favorite back issue that you think would be of particular interest, please mention it. Contact at address below.

Here's a quick, slick way to tell potential members about BMHA: have them connect with our website at:
<http://www.ragbrai.org/bmha/bmha.html>.

BMHA'ers to Help on Texas Tour.

CYCLE TEXAS, the week-long tour of the Texas hill country (October 12-18) will have ham radio communications. Bill Sharp, W8HI, and Dave Gerbig, WB9MZL, have organized this effort and will be operating bicycle-mobile along the hilly, backroads route. Jean, N0EOX, and Hartley Alley, NA0A, will provide a mobile net control station from their RV. Texan hams in the area are slated to drive sag and bike repair vehicles.

—Hartley Alley, NAOA, Editor

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Scott Farrell, KE4WMF, stops in the woods to show off his Super Ham Station. (see page 4) Reason for no helmet: "This is just out my back door. I just popped out for the photo!"

TRAVEL

Northern Exposure Fat-Tire Tour

The second annual (August 10-17) Northern Exposure mountain bike tour was a seven-day, 300-mile, mostly off-pavement, adventure in Michigan's western Upper Peninsula. The trip started in the little town of Watersmeet on a flat rail-trail and ended with a nine mile climb up Brockway Mountain, followed by a screaming downhill run into Copper Harbor, on the tip of a sliver of land that juts north into Lake Superior. The tour was sponsored by the League of Michigan Bicyclists, who did an excellent job of keeping countless details sorted out. The tour leader, Roger Storm, happened to be a ham---KC8ICS. He and all the staff members were unpaid volunteers. There were approximately eighty riders.

We pedaled on logging roads, snowmobile trails, abandoned railways, single tracks and back roads. We rode past waterfalls, pristine lakes, rapid rivers and the rugged Lake Superior shore, camping each night in state parks. At times we rode for hours without seeing a house or other signs of habitation. Deer and other wildlife were abundant. A few people saw bears.

sweep vehicle in the more rugged areas. (I had the honor of driving this vehicle.) In the *really* rugged areas (which were impassable even to an SUV, particularly the alternate routes added this year in response to requests for more challenges) the trails were swept by bicycle-mobile hams. While the easy alternate routes were swept by Art McCleer, KC8Z, the rugged routes were swept by Donald Stahlbaum, KC8HVQ*. In one case, it was decided that the risk of injury was too great for Donald to sweep alone, so Kevin Ratcliff, KB9MQU*, was notified by radio, that since he was in the last group allowed in, he would be the designated sweep---Kevin, though only 15, is certified in CPR, First Aid, and Search and Rescue.

Riders exited these rugged alternate routes with tales of fording streams, falling in creeks and flying over handlebars. One rider "caught" a flying bike across his chest and had the muddy tire tracks on his t-shirt to prove it. They loved it!

The mid-week free day was scheduled at Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park. As rest and relaxation, some riders chose to rent sea kayaks while others rode or hiked wilderness trails and still others rode their bikes up a service road to the top of the mountain and then sailed down the ski runs. A few even took naps and rested.

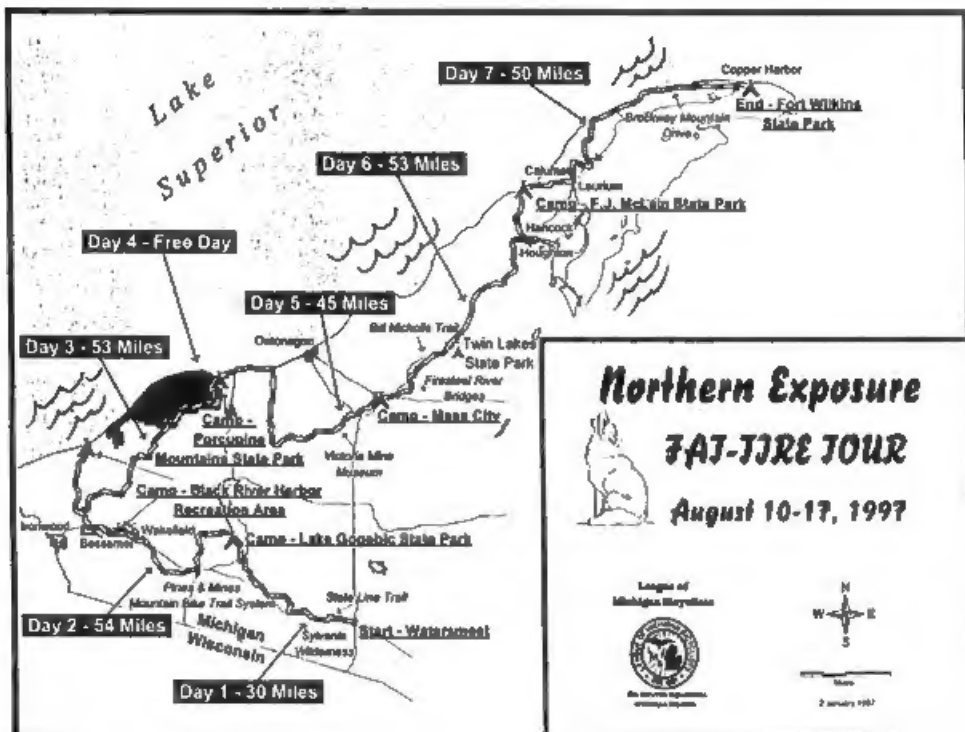
RADIO GEAR. Although the UP (Yoo Pee) is sparsely populated and towns are small, the local hams do maintain a number of repeaters, which we put to good use. The terrain and, we suspect, the iron and copper ore in the ground, made communications difficult at times. In fact, signals sometimes seemed to be sucked into the ground. Some of us called it the "Yooper Triangle Effect", (locals are called "Yoopers"). This situation often necessitated the use of high power settings and antennas other than duckies. Two-meter bicycle antennas included two "Hot Sticks", which are radio-mounted collapsible units, a 5/8-wave mag mount on a metal box mounted on the rear carrier, a 450-ohm ladder line antenna on a flag pole, and a quarter-wave atop a 10-foot PVC pipe. They all did a fine job, however the "Hot Sticks" required that the riders stop and extend them when needed.

In addition to the hams mentioned above, Katy Ratcliff, KB9QVK* operated bicycle-mobile, and Karen Jacobi, KC8DNG, and Donna Stahlbaum, KC8DPP, drove sag vans. We had a fine time. In fact, I'm already thinking about next year's third annual Northern Exposure Fat Tire Tour.

* *BMHA member*

—Ken Ratcliff, KB9MQT*

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The isolation of the area and the ruggedness of the route necessitated some changes from the way most week-long tours are operated. Since there were practically no places to buy food on the route, all meals (including lunches and snacks) were supplied by the tour. Lunches were served on the trail, often in very scenic locations. Breakfast and dinner were served in state park shelters, usually by local restaurateurs. Incidentally, the food was outstanding, especially the pasty (individual beef-and-potato pie), a local delicacy from the early copper and iron mining days.

RUGGED, ISOLATED ROUTE. The ham staff also had to make some changes from the way things are usually done. A radio-equipped four-wheel-drive SUV was used as a sag and

PUBLIC SERVICE

Bicycle Ride Across Georgia Uses Lots of Hams

Amateur radio again showed its public service side in providing communications support for the 1997 Bicycle Ride Across Georgia (BRAG). BRAG annually draws 2000 to 2800 riders on a week-long, family-oriented trek of at least 400 miles.

The course varies from year to year. The 1997 BRAG began in LaFayette in hilly northwest Georgia on June 15, and ended on June 21 in the low, agricultural plains of Albany in the southwestern part of the Peach State.

There were 20 hams among the 2500 registrants, and at least 10 carried their 2-meter HTs. Those hams flew distinctive bandannas from their tents and carried "Ham Radio" placards on their bikes. Being highly visible was important, in case riders needed communication. HTs were common, and antennas varied from rubber ducks to quarter waves, to J-poles to 9dB-gain collinear verticals. The author operated from his bike with an HT, speaker mike, J-pole and one spare nicad pack.



Photo credit: Miles McClelland

Don Sowers, KT4FH, of Conyers, GA, pedals and works the 2-meter net on the 1997 Bicycle Ride Across Georgia. Don's J-pole is a familiar sight on BRAG.

HeadQuarters communications was a 50-watt mobile rig powered by a car battery and feeding either a 5/8-wave mag mount atop the HQ camper or the bike-mounted J-pole. Battery re-charging was easy since reliable 110-volt AC was available every night. Actual station operation was always battery-powered, remote from AC lines.

A non-bicycling ham served as the BRAG Net Control Station each day. Ham clubs all along the route turned out volunteers to provide communication between rest stops, spaced about 12 miles apart, and overnight camp sites. These clubs

made their repeaters freely available, so BRAG was never out of communication. We were sometimes able to hit both day's start and day's end repeaters anywhere along the course. During the week, hams helped reunite separated riders, reported supply needs, mechanical breakdowns and summoned assistance, passing many routine and a few urgent messages in the process.

It rains a lot in Georgia in the summer, and on one particularly wet day, BRAG got live thunderstorm track reports from hams with access to NOAA weather radar imagery. This extra service added to the safety factor, allowing riders to make informed decisions of "weather" to keep riding.

A significant improvement we have demonstrated is to have a support vehicle equipped with listening capability, so that the non-ham driver has a ham radio to monitor. Since we were unable to provide a ham driver/bike mechanic, we gave the driver a listen-only radio so he could hear when he was needed. Listening equipment was loaned for the week by several riding hams. Needless to say, one of the author's goals is to have a licensed ham driving every sag vehicle.

We've found from experience that assigning a ham shadow to decision-makers is not as easy as it sounds. Different riding styles and schedules were tough to manage. It was more practical to have these ride personnel report their positions at rest stops etc. as they progressed down the course. Between the riding hams and those stationary at rest stops, we were able to find people quickly when we needed to. The best solution, of course, will be to get more of our ride organizers licensed!

—Philip Milazzo, KC6OEI, BRAG Communications Dir.

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'98 Alaska Tour Seeks Riders

BMHA members are invited to tour the Alaska Highway with the Cross Canada Cycle Tour Society (CCCTS). Slated for June-July 1998, the 35-day tour starts in Fairbanks and runs south to Dawson Creek, British Columbia. 25 cycling days, averaging 62 miles-per-day.

Chuck Dick, VE7MHA, and Lynn Dick, VE7MGK, two BMHA members, will be organizing and leading this tour for the CCCTS. Lynn writes: "The Cross Canada Cycle Tour Society is a non-profit society founded in 1983, primarily to entice seniors to cycle across Canada (hence the name). We have 450 members in Canada, USA, New Zealand and Australia. Similar to the International Bicycle Touring Club, members plan and lead all trips. Our members have led trips in the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

"We have a large kitchen/dining tent and participants form teams and prepare meals. Our trips are sagged—at present we're looking for a sagwagon driver for this tour, most expenses paid. The CCCTS is a bunch of friendly people who love to cycle. Our membership dues are \$30 CDN single. \$35 CDN family."

For information concerning the Alaska Tour, including a sample copy of the CCCTS monthly newsletter; or on just joining a fun club and perhaps participating in future tours, please contact:

Chuck Dick

3244 West 38th Avenue Phone: 604 261 5092

Vancouver, BC

Canada V6N 2X6

CCCTS e-mail: cccts@vcn.bc.ca

Web Site: <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/cccts/> Fax: (604)433-7710

GEAR

Mountain Bike Becomes Super Ham Station

Can bicycling and Amateur Radio coexist as one activity? Absolutely! Bicyclists often choose to ride their bicycles in order to exercise, seek adventure, save fuel, and avoid stop and go traffic. Amateur Radio operators often have ham radios in their automobiles so they may operate them outside the confines of their homes. There is no reason why someone cannot enjoy a good bicycle ride while having the benefits of Amateur Radio. Here is a little about myself, and how I integrated my two favorite pastimes:

I joined the United States Coast Guard in 1986 and bought my first road racing bicycle in 1987. I was a licensed road racer and I've always been a fast recreational rider, averaging about 500 miles per month. Now I prefer to log my miles doing organized rides, commuting to and from work, and exploring off-road areas. I still have my old racing bike, and a tandem that I ride with my wife, but I mostly ride my TREK Y5 full-suspension all-terrain bicycle.



TREK Y5 ready to go. Note the sleek antenna mount.

I began Amateur Radio study while stationed aboard a Coast Guard cutter. I received my Technician Class license in March 1995 and bought a YAESU FT-11R 2m handheld transceiver (HT) to use during the morning and afternoon commutes. As spring approached, I started riding my bicycle more often. Soon, I was making the 22-mile round trip commute to and from work, just as I always had when the roads were ice-free. Then the thought occurred to me, "Why should I stop talking on the radio just because I'm on a bicycle?" I began carrying the HT with me, but the rubber ducky antenna just wasn't performing well enough. That's when a series of modifications began.

My first modification was to upgrade the antenna. Since about 80% of my hamming is done from a bicycle, I've learned a few things about what is important when working bicycle mobile. I believe the most important element of a bicycle mobile station is the antenna, especially one that does not

require a groundplane. Here is my station now, starting with the antenna:

My primary antenna is a LARSEN NMO-150 HW 1/2-wave. Copper-wire "I-poles" are great, but they're a little awkward on lightweight bicycles (especially off-road) and they take a real beating in the woods. I find the LARSEN to be light and nimble, easily flexing around low tree branches and other obstacles in the woods. The antenna is mounted to a tubular aluminum support that I fabricated to fit to the water bottle mount behind my seat.

Moving forward, one or more PANASONIC gel cells are kept under the seat. Currently, I prefer to carry a 6V 4Ah battery so I may operate my HT and the headlights at the same time. Obviously, I don't run the headlights full-time, so I actually have plenty of HT use available. I get 2W from my HT this way, which is usually enough.



HT, horn, headlight, cyclocomputer—each in its place.

The HT is encased by a modified P5 soft case, by THE POUCH. The P5 case rests in a homemade handlebar mount, created by gluing and screwing the mounting pieces of a CATEYE HL-500 headlight to a small carved up RADIO SHACK project box. Since I ride on rocky trails, I have reinforced the P5 by adding thick velcro straps and special cutouts so the HT won't fall off the mount. The P5 is trimmed so I have full access to the keypad and display. The finished product is a fully adjustable handlebar-mounted HT mount with the quick-release features of the HL-500. An LEP-500Y speaker/microphone, by ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTORS, gives me hands-free operation. The combined weight of the bicycle and the ham rig is just under 35 pounds.

My design's only drawback is the equipment's vulnerability to damage in a crash. Since I usually lay the bike on its side in a crash, the equipment should be adequately protected by the handlebar ends (a recent crash proved that I'm more susceptible to broken parts than the radio).

My goal is to take my bicycle mobile station beyond simple conversation and into some sort of community service, such as search and rescue, or event coordination. Even without community services, I can still report traffic accidents and other emergencies before most people can get to telephones.

Overall, I'm very happy with what I have. I'm sure I don't have the greatest station in Amateur Radio. I've traded some performance for weight and size. Still, I'm able to use just about any 2-meter repeater within 10 to 15 miles (I use some from 40 miles <65 miles is my 2W record>). I think it's interesting that I was able to take two hobbies and combine them into one. Fellow cyclists have to agree that I am one of the safest cyclists to ride with because more help is just a quick call or telephone patch away. One thing is certain: I can't complain about the performance I'm getting from a BICYCLE station!

—Scott A. Farrell, KE4WMF

USCGC Campbell (WMEC-909)

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New Bedford MA 02740 ke4wmf@aol.com

NEW MEMBERS

We're pleased to add these names to our Membership List:

George M Baron, KC7VXU, POB 3175, Port Angeles WA 98362
Valerie Moore, KC2AZX, 359 N. Pleasant Av, Ridgewood NJ 07450
Katy Ratcliff, KB9QVK, 501 E University, Bloomington IN 47401
Donald Stahlbaum, KC8HVQ, 39475 Fisk Lk. Rd, Paw Paw MI 49079

With traditional ham friendliness, make contact with these new members, welcome them to BMHA, and help them with any problems they might have.

REMINDERS

BMHA Net....on 20

TIME: 2000 UTC and four hours later at 0000 UTC.

DATE: 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month.

FREQ: 14.253 — plus or minus the QRM.

Look for me, NF0N, at those times, and if I'm unable to call the net please look for those who have picked up the net when I've been out of town. In particular, look for Assistant Net Controls Jim Kortge, NU8N, and John Liebenrood, K7RO. Jim covers the East, John covers the West, and I cover the middle.

—Mike Nickolaus, NF0N, *BMHA Net Control*
316 E. 32nd St., S. Sioux City, NE 68776

For Sale. Do you have bicycle-mobile-related radio equipment for sale? Send in a description and we'll run it. Limit of 20 words, plus your name, address, phone. For members only.

Back Issues Still Available. You may purchase any of the twenty seven back issues of the BMHA NewsLetter for \$1.50 each, postpaid. For info on the contents of the various issues send a business-size SASE to: BMHA, POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306-4009, and ask for the Index of Back Issues. This service available to members only.

Your Bicycle Flies For Free! As a member of BMHA you get free transport of your bicycle, when you fly on Northwest Airlines. You save \$90 on a roundtrip flight. For details call Wild World of Travel, Missoula MT, 1-800-735-7109. Mention that you're a network member of Adventure Cycling.

If you tell us your bike tour plans we'll publish them in the NewsLetter and help make it possible for you to meet fellow BMMHAers in person or on radio as you pedal along. Just send in your route and the dates.

When you write a plug for BMHA (and please do!) in your local club's newsletter, be sure to include this information: "The annual dues is \$10. To receive a sample copy of the BMHA Newsletter and other bike-mobile info send an SASE to BMHA, Box 4009-RC, Boulder CO 80306." This will save our club a lot of trouble and expense. The info will be sent next day.

BMHA NEWSLETTER

Editor: Hartley Alley, NA0A

Associate Editor: Skip LaFetra, AA6WK
Assistant Editor: Bil Paul, KD6JUI

Design: Jean Alley, N0EOX

Board of Advisors:

Russell Dwarshuis, KB8U Len Koppl, KD0RC
Mike Nickolaus, NF0N Bob Pulhuj, KE8ZJ
Chairman and Founder: Hartley Alley, NA0A

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We welcome articles, suggestions, letters, announcements, photos, artwork — anything pertaining to bicycling while operating an amateur radio, or vice versa.

Submitted material will be edited for clarity and, if necessary, shortened to fit space constraints. Material should be submitted before Mar 1, June 1, Sept 1, or Dec 1 for inclusion in the ensuing issue.

BMHA NEWSLETTER, a quarterly publication of the Bicycle Mobile Hams of America — Jan, Apr, July, Oct.

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ABOUT BMHA

For the information of our first-time readers

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America got its start when a 'Stray' in the June '89 QST magazine asked to "get in touch with hams who operate their radios while bicycle-mobile", signed by Hartley Alley, NA0A. Twenty five hams responded, filled out questionnaires, and received a summary of the collected data.

In April of '90 we had our first BMHA Forum at the Dayton HamVention. We played to a packed house, overflowed the room, and added 54 names to our mailing list. Our seven subsequent forums have drawn increasingly larger audiences, and now BMHA is firmly established as a 'regular' at this world-renowned event.

This is the twenty-ninth issue of our quarterly newsletter, which has become the clearing house for the exchange of info and ideas for the hams who go on the air from their bicycles. Since the last issue of this newsletter we have added 4 new members. The total membership now stands at 445, with members in 43 states, and six countries. BMHA is affiliated with Adventure Cycling Association and the League of American Bicyclists.

BMHA membership puts you in touch with a friendly and helpful group of bike-riding hams. You'll make contacts through our membership directory, packet and E-mail address lists, bi-weekly net on 20 meters, annual meeting and Forum at the Dayton HamVention and other regional meetings, and of course through the BMHA NewsLetter, which has articles on bike trips, antennas, other gear, operating tips, etc. Membership application blank on the next to last page.

GETTING STARTED

Column conducted by Bil Paul, KD6JUI

Using High Frequency (HF) Gear on Bike Trips

We pulled into a campground at Crescent Lake, Oregon after a day of pushing our bikes through a snowfield up north of Mt. Bachelor. This was our final night on the road. My ham friend threw up a dipole antenna in the trees, hooked up his MFJ transceiver, and began getting morse code ham contacts around the U.S. I put up my home-made ground plane antenna for 14 MHz and hunted uselessly for contacts using my Oak Hills Research transceiver. Finally, I had a bite. It turned out to be in Sweden, some 8,000 miles away. Not bad for three watts of power!

In past columns I've mostly covered the use of handie-talkie-style transceivers for bike use in the frequencies 144 MHz and above. The last several columns have talked about home-made bike antennas for that use. For those of you who have recently entered ham radio, the limited range of these rigs (pretty much line-of-sight to the horizon, or a hundred or so miles using repeaters) may prompt you to ask, "Where's the 'world' in the world of ham radio?"

It is possible to talk to the world using only a few watts of power while on bike trips, using the lower frequencies of 1-30 MHz. How does this work? A high-up layer of the atmosphere returns (bounces) your signal back to earth hundreds of miles away. The signal then bounces off the earth and goes back up. Repeated up-and-down bounces can theoretically send your signal all the way around the earth and back to you from the opposite direction! This doesn't normally happen with transmissions 144 MHz (2 meters) and higher.



His tent pitched, it's time to get on the air. Bil Paul, KD6JUI, "talking to the world" from White Wolf Campground, Yosemite.

I'm going to limit myself to talking about ham radio setups OFF the bike on bike trips. That's because I've never operated on the lower frequencies while riding a bike. There are several other BMHA members who can tell of their experiences in that area. In particular, Wayne Estes, W9AE, Russell Dwarshuis, KB8U, Elroy Shelley, WB9GIE, and Ned Mountain, WC4X.

Operating in the field using low power (typically under 5 watts, commonly called QRP operation) on the lower short-wave (or HF) frequencies, you can operate with either voice or morse code. I usually use morse code because it's easier to get a signal out and be copied, and the equipment required is simpler and less expensive. You will also need more than an entry-level (Technician) ham license. Except for the highest HF band, 28 MHz (or 10 meter band), which at present isn't "open" much for long-distance communications, you will need a General Class license, which requires a morse code test and written test. There's a lot of argument in the ham community right now about the need for a code test, but we still have it. Some people learn it easily, some don't.

I'm not going to dwell on how to get a higher class license, but you can get plenty of info about it from the American Radio Relay League web site at <http://www.arrl.org> or from the ARRL at 225 Main St., Newington, CT 06111-1494.

If you're good with a soldering iron and building electronic equipment, here are some companies which sell HF kits: Oak Hills Research at 20879 Madison St., Big Rapids, MI 49307; Wilderness Radio at PO Box 734, Los Altos, CA 94023; Kanga Kits US, c/o Bill Kelsey, 3521 Spring lake Dr., Findlay, OH 45840; and Ten Tec which also sells manufactured rigs (I use their "Scout" transceiver at home). Their address is 1185 Dolly Parton Parkway, Sevierville, TN 37862. MFJ Enterprises at Box 494, Miss. State, MS 39762 also sells manufactured transceivers. (Some of these addresses are old and may have changed.) Overall, prices range from \$50 to around \$500 for a new rig. I've been using the Wilderness Radio Sierra transceiver on bike tours for the last three years.

Solar Power. On a bike tour (I'll be on one June 14-22 in Central and Southern California) I typically ride during the day with my solar cell deployed, which charges a 1.2 amp-hour 12-volt lead-acid gel cell battery. When we settle into a campground and I get my tent up, I can be seen sending fish line up in the nearest high tree with a slingshot. With that, I'm able to pull up my multi-band inverted V antenna (more about that in the next column). Then I hook up the Wilderness Radio Sierra transceiver, battery and Kanga tuner/SWR meter, tune up and I'm on the air, usually operating on 40, 30 and 20 meters (7, 10.1 and 14 MHz). Sometimes I set an alarm and operate during the night, using a little light powered by the gel cell. Cozy! Last year while operating from deep in Yosemite Valley I was even able to get a signal out.

As I've always said, antennas are my true love. In the next column I'll talk about HF antennas for field use—the kind that are easy enough to put up one day and take down the next.

This brings up an interesting point. When people ask about ham radio and I say I talk to people on the air, they seem mystified that I would want to talk to strangers that I might never talk to again. To me, though, there's a primal thrill in sending waves out into the ether, using very low power, and getting a response from halfway around the world. Unlike Internet, there are no middlemen! Once you've got the equipment, communicating is free! Even if most other modes of communication are down in an emergency, radios still work!

—Bil Paul, KD6JUI
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Belmont, CA 94002.

Q and A

(Q and A is a new feature. Send your questions to POB 4009, Boulder CO 80306, or E-mail to hartleya@aol.com. Our board of experienced bike-mobes will try to provide helpful answers.)

Q: Jim Skrenka, K9DDB, asks: I'm interested in operating the low bands while bicycling. My biggest question is how to ground an HF antenna. I'm riding a TREK 9800, which is a carbon fibre frame that offers no ground opportunity. I could probably trail a counterpoise wire for 10 meters. But I'm really interested in 20 or 40 meters. Any thoughts?

A: I suggest taping or wrapping a wire around all the frame tubes, and using that as a counterpoise. It might even help to attach one of the wires to a small washer that you'd put on the end of the axle of the wheels so that the wheels are part of the counterpoise. I don't suggest trying a trailing wire because it could get caught in a trailing rider's wheel. I suspect that the counterpoise on the bike has more of an effect of a capacitive coupling to the earth than as a real counterpoise at HF for 20 and 40 meters. Another possibility is a small loop antenna, since they don't need a counterpoise. I've never tried one myself, though.
—Russell Dwarshuis, KB8U

Q: Ron Royder writes: I'm the director of CYCLE TEXAS, a week-long bike tour. I've been told that ham radio provides the best communication for this type of event, and that I should pass the ham tests and get a license. What's the easiest way to pass the tests?

A: I've been involved in teaching and testing, as has my brother, for over 20 years and we both agree, that it's more important to pass the test and *then* learn the material, than visa versa. So, we teach to pass, the easiest, least painful way possible. And our recommendation is that you buy the most recent edition of the book "Now You're Talking". Order it from ARRL, 1-888-277-5289, or your Radio Shack store. Turn to the back, go thru each of the 250 questions or so on both the novice and technician written exams. Highlight, in your favorite color, each correct answer only, and then go back and read all the questions, and *only* the right answer. Do this 10 times and you'll get 100% on the exam.

Now, this isn't easy, by any means. You really have to concentrate on reading every word in every question and answer, all the way through, 10 times. So, you can do half the questions

each nite and take 20 days or you can go thru the whole thing each nite for 10 days.

Any electronics store that caters to hams will know where tests are given. You can even find, I'm sure, several courses and classes that are given in metro Houston. Regardless of whatever else you do, or if you do nothing else, you have to absolutely go thru ALL the questions and answers TEN times. If you do, you'll pass the test. And that's what's critical.
—Bill Sharp, W8HI

Ham Radio Aids in Biker's Rescue.

(The following item, from the August 15, 1997 "ARRL LETTER", was sent in by Al Gritzmacher, AE2T.)

Mountain biker Tom Thompson is grateful for ham radio, which played a vital role August 3 in getting him prompt medical attention after he was injured during a ride in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Gorge. Ham and paramedic Joe Cummings, N3SQR, of Warrington, Pennsylvania, was biking with his daughter in the area when they came upon Tom, seriously injured with broken bones and facial injuries. Joe used his H-T and the Carbon Amateur Radio Club repeater to reach Ann Keiser, KO3M, who called 911 and got help on the way. Tom was especially fortunate that a ham found him, since the area where he was injured is outside the normal range for cellular telephones.—Amy Zimmerman, KD3TI

BMHA Treasury Report

Fiscal year, July 1, 1996 to June 30, 1997.

Beginning bank balance:	4,382.92	
Monies received:	3,477.00	
Total:		7,859.92
Expenses:		
Printing and Xerox:	1,855.87	
Postage:	1,249.72	
Office supplies & expenses:	786.35	
Miscellaneous:	277.00	
Total Expenses:		4,168.94
Bank balance on hand, June 30, 1997:		\$3,690.98

Membership Application

MemAPPL4.wps © 17 97 /pc /newmem /pac /E-mail /newHAM /NONham /news /Q's /test /walc /arrl

BICYCLE MOBILE HAMS OF AMERICA
Box 4009, Boulder, CO 80306-4009

date _____

Individual \$10 _____ new member? _____ renewal? _____

(US or Canada)

Family \$15 _____ Foreign \$15 _____ Donation \$ _____

(limit: two persons)

Make check payable to BMHA, in US dollars or international money order.

Name _____ Call _____

Address _____ License Class _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____ @ _____

Age _____ Most miles bicycled in one day _____

BMHA's Official Logo

The next time you need to order new QSL cards, don't forget to include the BMHA logo in your design. Here's the official logo, as designed by Russ Dwarshuis, KB8U.

BICYCLE MOBILE



HAMS OF AMERICA

BICYCLE MOBILE



HAMS OF AMERICA

BMHA NEWSLETTER

Bicycle Mobile Hams of America
PO Box 4009
Boulder, CO 80306-4009

First Class Mail

COMMENTS

....We're now the proud owners of IC-W32A dual-band handhelds and antennas for each bike. Two weeks ago we were in the backyard putting the first antenna on my bike, and to check it out we had a friend in North Vancouver standing by for a call. When we signed off, another voice suddenly chipped in before we shut down. It was a ham (KB7PYF) in Poulsbo, WA--100 miles away!--who usually monitors 147.2. What a pleasant surprise that was! Now we're set for all our bike tours.

---Chuck, VE7MHA, and Lynn Dick, VE7MGK,
Vancouver, BC, Canada

....Just a note to tell everyone I am still biking. To misquote a famous dead guy, "I bike therefore I Ham". Just finished my eleventh attempt at the Ride Across Indiana. Too hot, too long, too old, no ham radio participants to talk to.

I have rejoined the gainfully employed, working at a home improvement center. I seem to be the resource person for all questions electrical. No one seems to know or care what my title is, they pay what I asked, a near perfect situation. I will soon convince them that they need to carry ham antenna materials. Look out, World.

---Dave Gerbig, WB9MZL, Bloomington, IN

....I'd like to brag a bit about my wife, Katy, KB9QVK. She became a ham this summer and already has been a member of the bicycle-mobile volunteer staff on the Michigander Mountain Bike Tour and the Northern Exposure Fat-Tire Tour. She carried her radio on TOTT (Tour of the Thumb), also in Michigan. She rode TRIRI (The Ride in Rural Indiana) before she got her

radio. She has ridden over 2,400 miles so far this year. Her longest day: 80 miles on a mountain bike. She's a real ham and a real bikie! I'm proud of her. I should also mention my kids, of whom I'm equally proud. Kevin, KB9MQU, age 15, was also bike-mobile staff on the same rides as his mother and rode all but TRIRI. Maura also rode all but TRIRI, and all before she turned 12 (don't tell the Michigander legal staff).

---Ken Ratcliff, KB9MQT, Bloomington, IN

....Interestingly, the most memorable moment I have of this year's GOBA [Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure] had nothing to do with the technical side of the communications. In fact, it covered just one little span of time on Saturday, the last day, at about 10 o'clock in the morning. After Jeff, K8ZDA, another bicycle-mobile ham and I had left Nevada, we crested a hill and I saw what I thought was one of the prettiest scenes I'd experienced all week. On my left, at the side of the road, just before a downhill turn to the right was a young ham radio operator, in her folding chair, with her headset on, playing her flute. She was about 12 or 13 years old, sitting in front of a whitewashed barn with the fields stretching out behind her to a line of trees that bordered the creek in the distance. I could hear her song, the sounds of birds in the trees, the singing of my bicycle tires and the voices coming from my speaker mic clipped to my bike jersey. On the right side of the road was a farm house. As I made the turn and looked back past the house and up the hill, other riders, in their brightly colored cycling jerseys, were rising above the top edge of the ridge and coming down past the flute-playing amateur. She just kept on playing, headset on, listening to her handheld. What a picture she made. What a memory. It was a GOBA moment.

---Bill Sharp, W8HI, Delaware, OH